

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 231658Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3842

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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USMISSION USBERLIN

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TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF CDU SECRETARY
GENERAL BIEDENKOPF

REF: BONN 16745

BEGIN SUMMARY: ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC AND PROMISING
STARS IN THE GERMAN POLITICAL CONSTELLATION, CDU SECRE-
TARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF, HAS RECENTLY COME UNDER CON-
SIDERABLE ATTACK FROM THE CSU AND HEAVY CRITICISM FROM
MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY. THE BIEDENKOPF INTERVIEW IN
"SPIEGEL" FURTHER STRAINED THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
CDU AND CSU--AN UNHELPFUL SITUATION IN THE PRE-ELECTION
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PERIOD--AND THE PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BIEDENKOPF

AND HIS MENTOR, CDU CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL, HAVE SUFFERED.
FOR THE MOMENT, AT LEAST, THE WORST SEEMS TO BE OVER AND
BIEDENKOPF'S FUTURE STILL HOLDS CONSIDERABLE PROMISE.
END SUMMARY

1. ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST NEWCOMERS IN RECENT YEARS ON
THE GERMAN POLITICAL SCENE IS CDU SECRETARY GENERAL
KURT BIEDENKOPF. NOT ONLY IS BIEDENKOPF CREDITED WITH
BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO THE CDU BUT ALSO FOR INCREASING
EFFECTIVENESS AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARTY BY INTRODUC-
ING MODERN MANAGEMENT METHODS. HE IS OFTEN CITED AS A
PRIME EXAMPLE OF KOHL'S TALENT FOR SURROUNDING HIMSELF
WITH FIRST RATE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, BIEDENKOPF HAS COME
UNDER SHARP ATTACK FROM THE CDU'S BAVARIAN SISTER PARTY,
THE CSU, BECAUSE OF A RECENT INTERVIEW HE GAVE IN
"SPIEGEL" (REFTEL). HE HAS ALSO COME UNDER INCREASINGLY
HEAVY CRITICISM FROM FELLOW CDU MEMBERS. FOR EXAMPLE,
EVEN CDU POLITICIANS WHO SYMPATHIZE WITH BIEDENKOPF'S
LIBERAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY ARE PRIVATELY CRITICAL OF
THE SECRETARY GENERAL.

2. AS AN "OUTSIDER" BIEDENKOPF LACKS CREDENTIALS AS A
PRACTICING POLITICIAN. HE MADE HIS REPUTATION AS THE
YOUNGEST UNIVERSITY RECTOR IN WEST GERMANY AND AS A
MANAGER OF A MAJOR GERMAN INDUSTRIAL CONCERN (HENKEL).
HE THEN ENTERED CDU POLITICS AT THE TOP. THIS WAS BOUND
TO IRRITATE MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE PARTY WHO HAD
EARNED THEIR POLITICAL SPURS IN THE ROUGH AND TUMBLE
WORLD OF PARTY POLITICS. AN INTELLECTUAL, HE DOES NOT
SUFFER FOOLS GLADLY AND HAS LITTLE TIME FOR THE RAMBLING
SMALL-TALK THAT IS THE DAILY BREAD OF MOST POLITICIANS.
IN ADDITION TO HIS INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE, BIEDENKOPF
IS CONSIDERED BY SOME TOP CDU POLITICIANS AS A PRIMA
DONNA. THESE PERSONALITY TRAITS HAVE MADE HIM POLITICAL
ENEMIES WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY.

3. MUCH OF THE PERSONAL CRITICISM AGAINST BIEDENKOPF
IS CAUSED BY THE ENVY SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND COM-
PETITORS FEEL FOR BIEDENKOPF'S OBVIOUS INTELLECTUAL
TALENTS AND HIS SUCCESS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER,
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THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT SOME OF THE CRITICISM IS JUSTI-
FIED AND THAT BIEDENKOPF'S LACK OF POLITICAL EXPERIENCE
HAS ON OCCASION TRIPPED HIM UP. THE "SPIEGEL" INTERVIEW
FOR EXAMPLE, WAS GUARANTEED TO PROVOKE A ROAR FROM THE
BAVARIAN LION, FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS. BIEDENKOPF NOT
ONLY LET "SPIEGEL" GET BY WITH EXTREMELY NASTY REFER-
ENCES TO STRAUSS IN THEIR QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISPUTING
THEM, BUT THEN INDICATED THAT CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CAN-

DIDATE KOHL ALONE WOULD DETERMINE CAMPAIGN POLICY.

4. BIEDENKOPF IS CERTAINLY CLEVER ENOUGH TO HAVE KNOWN THAT HIS INTERVIEW IN "SPIEGEL" WOULD FORCE A CONFRONTATION WITH STRAUSS. WHY DID HE DO IT? ONE POSSIBLE REASON IS PERSONAL PIQUE. SOME MEMBERS OF THE CSU HAVE BEEN CARRYING OUT AN ANTI-BIEDENKOPF WORD-OF-MOUTH CAMPAIGN WHICH INCLUDED DEFAMING THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PERSONAL LIFE. BIEDENKOPF HAS ADMITTED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT PERSONALITY CONFLICTS HAVE PLAYED

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A MAJOR ROLE IN THE CDU-CSU DISPUTE.

5. THE LATEST OUTBREAK OF THE BIEDENKOPF-STRAUSS DIS-
PUTE HAS DAMAGED BIEDENKOPF'S RELATIONS WITH HIS MENTOR,
HELMUT KOHL. KOHL RETURNED FROM A TRIP TO MOSCOW TO
FIND HIMSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STRAUSS-BIEDENKOPF
CONTROVERSY. KOHL, WHO PLACES CONSIDERABLE VALUE ON
"INTEGRATING" CONFLICTING VIEWS WITHIN THE PARTY, WAS
EXTREMELY ANGRY WITH HIS SECRETARY GENERAL FOR PROVOKING
STRAUSS. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT KOHL
SUSPECTS THAT BIEDENKOPF HAS AMBITIONS TO REPLACE HIM
AS PARTY CHAIRMAN IF HE SHOULD FALTER.

6. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF BIEDENKOPF'S LACK OF POLITICAL
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"FINGERSPITZENGEFUEHL" WHICH CREATED AN UNNECESSARY FUSS
WITHIN THE PARTY WAS BIEDENKOPF'S ANNOUNCEMENT WITHOUT
HAVING INFORMED BARZEL THAT HE WANTED TO REPLACE
BARZEL AS NUMBER ONE OF THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN
"LANDESLISTE" IN NEXT YEAR'S BUNDESTAG ELECTION.
ERRORS OR MISTAKES HAVE PROVEN FATAL. HE DESCRIBES
HIMSELF AS "ALIVE AND KICKING". KURT BIEDENKOPF REMAINS
IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD A "COMER" ON THE NATIONAL
POLITICAL SCENE. HOWEVER, IF HE INTENDS TO CLIMB TO
THE TOP OF HIS PARTY HE WILL HAVE TO TEMPER HIS HUBRIS
AND AVOID THE PITFALLS OF UNNECESSARY POLITICAL CON-
FRONTATION IN THE FUTURE.
HILLENBRAND

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